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SUBJECT: VISIT OF INL ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO LEBANON MARCH 30-31,  
2008

REF: BEIRUT 451

¶1. (U) Summary: During his official visit to Lebanon March 30 to March 31, 2008, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), David T. Johnson reaffirmed the U.S. government commitment to a sovereign, democratic Lebanon, and discussed INL's continuing support to enhance the capabilities of the Lebanese security forces. Discussions with Lebanese government officials, Internal Security Force's Command Staff and visits to the three principal training facilities of the ISF highlighted the continuing need for USG funded training, equipment and infrastructure upgrades to strengthen the ISF so that it can develop into a modern, professional police force capable of combating the terrorist and other criminal threats Lebanon faces. End summary.

¶2. (U) Accompanied by Charge d'Affaires (CDA) Michele Sison, INL Beirut Director, Virginia Sher Ramadan, INL officers Adam Bloomquist and Cassandra Stuart and White House Fellow Kathryn Spletstoser, A/S Johnson discussed capacity building and security issues with Lebanese government officials, including Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, Minister of Interior and Municipal Affairs Hassan Sabaa, Director General of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), Achraf Rifi, and members of his command staff, and General Siham Harakeh of the Directorate General of General Security (DGS).

SINIORA: ASSISTANCE NECESSARY,  
BUT SO ARE SOLUTIONS TO MIDDLE EAST ISSUES  
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¶3. (SBU) Prime Minister Siniora expressed his appreciation for the security assistance and training that INL has promised and delivered. With the Director General of the ISF seated beside him, the PM noted that a strong ISF is essential for Lebanese security, and that the lack of security has contributed to the difficult times Lebanon is facing. Siniora remarked that although all of the USG assistance programs are important to enhance Lebanon's security, the real problem is the Israeli occupation, and the lack of readiness to resolve it. (See Reftel for further reporting on PM Siniora's comments on the Lebanese political situation).

MINISTER OF INTERIOR STRESSES  
NEED TO STRENGTHEN BORDER SECURITY  
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¶4. (SBU) In his first meeting with Interior Minister Sabaa, whose Ministry has nominal authority over both the ISF and the DGS, Johnson made clear that INL assistance is part of the broader USG commitment to Lebanon. He explained INL's increasing assistance to

help stabilize post-conflict societies and its programs to strengthen democracies through criminal justice related institutional development. Sabaa thanked the USG for its support, and for recognizing the essential role the ISF plays.

Sabaa urged that border security assistance should be a top priority. Not only would border controls hinder the currently unimpeded smuggling of arms and terrorists into Lebanon across the porous Eastern border with Syria, it would also help to control the smuggling of drugs, cultivated in and exported from the Beqaa areas controlled by Hizbollah.

He explained that although the Northern Border Pilot Program aims to create a common border force including all four security agencies, in reality border security is currently under the control of one of the agencies of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Sabaa hopes that the ISF will one day have sufficient capacity to assume a larger protective role along the border and around the Palestinian camps, and assume its traditional policing responsibilities, now provided by the LAF.

#### ISF: CONTINUED ASSISTANCE NECESSARY

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15. (SBU) General Rifi, the well respected Commander of the ISF, Explain that the ISF suffered through 30 years of Syrian control, and that it lacks technical expertise because of the Syrian occupation, Rifi thanked the USG for its ongoing assistance and expressed his appreciation for the team efforts of the USG in working with the ISF to combat terrorism. Rifi highlighted that the ISF has expanded from 12,000 police to 23,500 since the withdrawal of the Syrians in 2005, but has not received any commensurate increase in its operating budget to handle the augmented costs

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associated with the greater number of personnel.

Noting that initially ISF coordinated on its own all assistance offered by international donors, Rifi admitted that with the increase in the number of donors and the amount and type of the foreign assistance offered in the last year, there is a need for greater coordination to avoid duplication and redundancy. He sought USG assistance to help generate ideas to strengthen its operations and training and to coordinate the international donations.

16. (U) Rifi stated that the ISF is intent on providing more human rights training for its staff and recruits, and wants to bring in women to the ISF, with an ultimate goal of hiring 3,000 to 4,000 female police. INL's refurbishing plans for the Police Academy are being drawn to accommodate the first group of women cadets with separate dormitories and facilities. Currently the ISF has only a handful of women, all computer specialists. (Note: the DGS has more female officers and inspectors; among its top command staff at least two are women officers, both of whom met with the A/S during this trip.)

#### DGS: BORDER SECURITY AND NEED FOR BIOMETRICS AND TRAINING

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17. (U) At the headquarters of the Directorate General for General Security (DGS) A/S Johnson met with the general in charge of border security, General Siham Harakeh, (filling in for General Wafiq Jezzine who fell ill the day before), and the head of the intelligence branch, Colonel Jumana Daniel. DGS is the security agency responsible for immigration and border inspection matters, including passports, visas, foreign residency papers, travel documents for refugees and naturalization. Although INL's ongoing assistance program in Lebanon has concentrated on the ISF, this week INL provided data mining software, 20 computers and training in the use of the software to the DGS, which is one of the four agencies of the nascent Common Border Force.

Harakeh reported that DGS has approximately 1,000 immigration inspectors, 350 of whom are assigned to the Beirut International Airport and 700 at the four land border crossings (soon to be

expanded to five). DGS inspectors have received little international training, apart from a short course in document fraud provided by the Germans. In order to properly protect Lebanese borders from unlawful entrants, Harakeh requested USG assistance for digital fingerprint or eye scan equipment and the necessary training in its use. Currently immigration and nationality checks are made only against name and birth date and place data, with no method to uncover identity fraud through biometric verifications. Harakeh and DGS also have responsibility over the detention of undocumented and trafficked foreigners in Lebanon, and DGS have worked to help establish protocols to combat trafficking in persons and provide refuge through the establishment of a safe house for trafficked women. A/S Johnson expressed USG support for continued cooperation in immigration and border security programs to strengthen Lebanese control over its border.

#### INL ASSISTANCE TO ISF

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18. (U) The meetings with the Director General of the ISF, Rifi, and his command staff, over the two day visit concentrated on discussing the progress of the ongoing training program and the provision of equipment and proposed infrastructure improvements. The multi-year U.S. Government assistance program to the ISF is focused on training, equipment donations and infrastructure development. Ten American police advisors, with three U.S. police specialists are currently working with ISF trainers and officers to train 8,000 police recruits and 1,200 instructors over a four year period in modern police practices, administration, democratic policing, human rights, criminal investigations and other essential law enforcement skills. U.S.-sponsored training also assists Lebanese police advisers in drafting curriculum and training police recruits. As the training program develops further, additional classrooms will be provided, police dormitories refurbished, and dining and kitchen facilities upgraded.

19. (U) The U.S. Government has been assisting the ISF in its development since October 2006 through several different programs. These programs have provided 3000 sets of civil disorder management equipment to the ISF Mobile Forces, 60 new sports utility vehicles and duty gear to 4000 cadets in various ISF units, and new academy

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classrooms, offices, firing range and equipment with which to provide training. Over the next three months, 300 new police cars will be delivered, and the program will finance the refurbishment of 11 police operation centers and substations with technologically advanced communications equipment, computers and GPS/GIS type software with the ultimate goal of providing communications connectivity to the entirety of the ISF.

#### VISITS TO THE TRAINING CENTERS

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110. (U) ISF training is divided among three centers: the main Academy at Warwar in Beirut (where basic training for recruits takes place), the Mobile Forces headquarters in Dbaye, a suburb of Beirut (where training of the SWAT team and the Black Panthers occurs) and in Aramoun near the Beirut airport, (where the ISF Information Bureau trains its special forces). The ISF would like to consolidate training at Aramoun, and has been seeking funding from international donors to build a new \$30 to \$50 million academy/ training facility on the 220,000 square meters Aramoun site. ISF is currently drafting plans for a new facility. A/S Johnson and CDA Sison affirmed the USG's commitment to work with other donors who could provide funding for the proposed training facility in Aramoun, and stated that the USG would be prepared to rechannel funding to equip portions of the new facility in cooperation with other donors.

111. (U) A/S Johnson visited all three training centers. At Warwar, he addressed the assembled press and the first class of 181 cadets of the INL Police Training Program, after taking a tour of the facilities and the INL funded classrooms. At Aramoun, the Information Bureau's Special Forces presented demonstrations on VIP protection and urban intervention and rescue techniques, as well as rappelling and firing range exhibits and obstacle course training.

In Dbaye, the mobile forces presented a simulated labor demonstration/riot, and showed how they can control it with an array of internationally donated advanced equipment, including armored vehicles, truck mounted water cannons to disperse crowds, and riot and crowd control gear provided by INL. General Robert Jabbour, head of the Mobile Forces, showed the delegation the 15 new Dodge Charger Police Cars that had just arrived from the U.S. as part of INL's Lebanon equipment donation program.

¶12. (U) Press coverage of the entire visit was extensive and positive. Print and broadcast media representing all political factions covered the visit and noted the aim of the INL program to support the democratic government of Lebanon and help it professionalize its security institutions.

¶13. (U) This message has been cleared by Assistant Secretary Johnson.

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